

*Reports from the Environmental Archaeology Unit, York 97/7, 3 pp. + 1 p. Appendix*

**Evaluation of vertebrate remains from excavations at Thornton Steward,  
Lower Wensleydale, North Yorkshire (site code: TS96)**

by

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**Summary**

*A small quantity of animal bone, recovered from excavations at Thornton Steward, Lower Wensleydale, was submitted for evaluation.*

*Although the bones were moderately well preserved, they formed too small an assemblage for useful interpretation and warrant no further analysis.*

**Keywords:** THORNTON STEWARD; LOWER WENSLEYDALE; NORTH YORKSHIRE; EVALUATION; VERTEBRATE REMAINS

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28 February 1997

## **Evaluation of vertebrate remains from excavations at Thornton Steward, Lower Wensleydale, North Yorkshire (site code: TS96)**

### **Introduction**

Excavations were carried out by Northern Archaeological Associates at Thornton Steward in 1996 prior to the installation of a water pipeline. Whilst much of the excavated area proved to be within the bounds of a cemetery site, a series of ditches was uncovered which possibly dated to the Roman period. Most of the animal bones, submitted for evaluation, were recovered from these features.

### **Methods**

All the hand-collected bone was examined; subjective records were made of preservation, angularity (i.e. the nature of the broken surfaces) and colour, whilst quantities, and identifications were noted where appropriate.

All fragments not identified to species or species group were recorded as 'unidentified'. These included skull, vertebra, rib and shaft fragments and other elements where species identification was unclear.

### **Results and discussion**

The very small assemblage of hand-collected animal bones was recovered from four contexts, and material from one of these has been excluded (Context 16, described by the excavator as a cleaning layer). Deposits from the ditch fills and associated feature provided a total of only 21 identifiable (131 g) and 100 unidentifiable (294 g) fragments.

Preservation of the material was mainly fair, with colour being brown or fawn. A few fragments were noted as being battered and eroded in appearance. However, for the most part, the broken surfaces were recorded as 'spiky'. Few of the bones showed evidence of butchery or dog gnawing.

Most of the identifiable fragments represented the remains of caprovids (16 fragments) and cattle (4). In addition, a single pig canine was present.

Details of the species and fragments present can be found in the Appendix.

### **Recommendations**

On the basis of such a limited assemblage and, with little information regarding the date of the deposits, it is clear that the vertebrate assemblage is of little interpretative value and, as a consequence, no further analysis of this material is recommended. It is also impossible to make further recommendations regarding the potential of material still unexcavated.

### **Retention and disposal**

The bone should be retained if required for archive purposes but there are no other reasons for long term retention.

## **Archive**

All material is currently stored in the Environmental Archaeology Unit, University of York, along with paper and electronic records pertaining to the work described here.

## **Acknowledgements**

The author is grateful to Northern Archaeological Associates for providing the material and archaeological information.

## Appendix

### *Bones from Site 1, Thornton Steward water pipeline*

#### **Context 20 (= 94) - Ditch fill**

Preservation: fair  
Colour: fawn/ brown  
Angularity: variable (mostly spiky, but a few battered fragments)

Material from this deposit appears to be quite fragmented with 50+% of the fragments being less than 5 mm in greatest dimension.

*Cattle* - 1 incisor and 1 maxillary premolar  
*Caprovid* - 1 M1/M2, 1 P3, 1 maxillary premolar, 1 distal tibia (m), 1 astragalus (m), 1 calcaneum (m), 1 femur and 1 metatarsal shaft  
*Unidentified* - 77 fragments, mainly shaft fragments from large and medium mammals.

Weight of identified fragments - 84 g  
Weight of unidentified fragments - 200 g

#### **Context 99 - Deposit cut by ditch cut 87**

Preservation: fair  
Colour: brown/fawn  
Angularity: spiky

*Cattle* - 1 mandibular molar fragment, 1 maxillary deciduous premolar  
*Caprovid* - 1 metatarsal (m), 1 P3, 1M3 and 2 first phalanges (1 acid etched)  
*Pig* - 1 canine (male)  
*Unidentified* - 23 fragments, mostly shaft and rib fragments from large mammals

Weight of identified fragments - 46 g  
Weight of unidentified fragments - 94 g

#### **Context 107 - Ditch fill**

Preservation: poor  
Colour: not recorded  
Angularity: battered

*Caprovid* - 2 maxillary molar fragments

Weight of identified fragments - 1 g